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### Sharing Isn't Always Caring: STI Concerns

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## Abstract

This study examined the relationship between gender and concern about contracting a sexually transmitted diseases during oral sex. It was hypothesized that concern regarding contracting a sexually transmitted disease would be higher in females in general than in males in general. College students completed a survey with questions regarding their concern levels about contracting an STI while having oral sex. The implications are discussed regarding the variance in concern from "never concerned" to "always concerned" of contracting an STI.

## Background

Oral sex is viewed by many as a low risk way of having non penetrative sex. There is a greater concern and risk involved for penetrative sex and therefore contraception is mainstreamed and talked about more. Barrier methods is under discussed in terms of non penetrative sex, specifically during oral sex. There is still risk involved with STI contraction during oral sex but undermined in discussion regarding contraception because more people feel the need to protect themselves during penetrative sex.

Previous research on college campuses that tracked sexual behavior shows a broad approach to examining concern regarding STI transmission and number of sexual encounters. There is little research that has been done on sexual orientation and concern of STI contraction during oral sex. Sexual orientation hasn't been examined extensively in these studies. Surveys are sent out grouping all the participants and were not grouped into categories that discussed sexual orientation. (Walsh, Fielder, M. Carey, K. Carey, 2013).

Given gender roles today in accordance with sexual script theory, women are viewed as sexual gatekeeper because they control sex in many ways This idea that women are the gatekeepers of sex is an idea deeply embedded in our cultural, biological, and social norms held by Western society (Simon, Gagnon, 2003). Women therefore should have more concern when it comes to any sexual act since their investment is higher and since they are more at risk. Non exclusively heterosexual males have a greater concern and risk for contracting HIV than exclusively heterosexual males and should therefore be more concerned regarding STI transmission. The fear of contracting HIV in non exclusively heterosexual men should perpetuate into fear of transmission during acts other than penetrative sex.

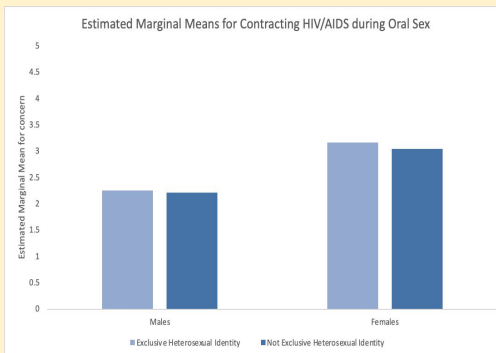
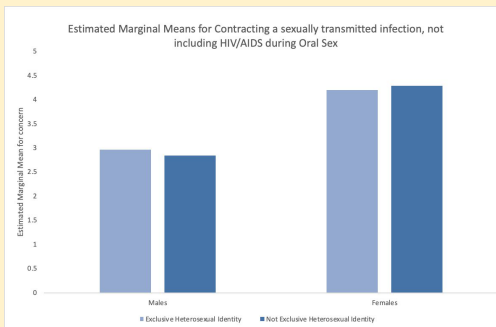
This study examines differences between exclusively heterosexual and non exclusively heterosexual individuals that engage in oral sex regarding their concern for contracting an STI during a sexual encounter.

## Hypotheses

The current study examined concern level in male and female college students of varying sexual orientations

Hypothesis : Non exclusively heterosexual men will be more concerned regarding contracting an STI during oral sex than exclusively heterosexual men while women in general will be more concerned than men of contracting an STI during oral sex.

## Results



## Methods

### Participants

Participants were undergraduates from a mid-sized university subject pool; each received class research credit for their participation.  
 - 70% were White, 5.0% were African American, 15.0% were Asian, 0.3% were Native American, 9% were Mixed Race/Other  
 - 76% individuals identified as exclusively heterosexual, 24% individuals identified as not exclusively heterosexual  
 - 561 males identified as exclusively heterosexual, 752 females identified as exclusively heterosexual. Totalling 1313 exclusively heterosexual individuals  
 - 124 males identified as not exclusively heterosexual, 282 females identified as not exclusively heterosexual. Totalling 406 not exclusively heterosexual individuals

### Procedure

Undergraduate participants completed an online survey about their attitudes and behaviors including contracting an STI during oral sex. Responses regarding sexual identity and sexual partners were recorded. Upon completion of the survey, information about the aims of the study was then disclosed to the participants.

## Results and Conclusion

The findings supported our second hypothesis that women in general would have a higher concern about STI contraction than men in general during oral sex. The surprising part of our findings was that exclusively heterosexual men actually were more concerned about contracting an STI during oral sex than non exclusively heterosexual men because there is more risk involved in not exclusively heterosexual men who have sex with other men for contracting an STI. It's interesting that men who reported having exclusively heterosexual sex are more cognisant of the risks involved.

Our hypothesis predicted the opposite that the men who are having sex with men would be more aware of STIs and concern levels in risk would be deeper rooted in attitude towards all types of sex. Fear of STI transmission such as HIV in the homosexual male community was hypothesized to be higher. The reasoning could be that this group of participants who took the survey and identified as not exclusively heterosexual men are unaware of the gay men's health crisis and the death that was involved with transmission of HIV.

The other half of the results regarding women is succinct with sexual script theory that gender roles are deeply important and rooted in our cultural, biological, and social identities. Women being sexual gatekeepers is the reason for this higher level of concern during oral sex even though the risk of contraction is still low.

Gender difference is a powerful motivator in western society and still motivates individuals behavior on college campuses as seen from the findings here. Future research might include more representation from individuals that identify as not exclusively heterosexual to make results more accurate since the number of not exclusive individuals who participated was low.

## References

Simon, Gagnon. 2013. "Sexual Scripts: Origins, Influences, and Changes." *Qualitative Sociology*  
 Walsh, J. L., Fielder, R. L., Carey, K. B., & Carey, M. P. (2013). Changes in women's condom use over the first year of college. *Journal of sex research*, 50(2), 128–138.